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Names of plants are spelled as given in the author's copy. The Journal has made every attempt to assure accuracy of all names used, but does not guarantee them to be so. Items in CAPITAL LETTERS indicate the title of a feature article. Page numbers in bold type (12) indicate an illustration of the item named. Casual references are not indexed. Major references are either in capital letters or have bold face figure references.

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A CACTUS EDITOR LOOKS AT YOU!

By E. SHURLY

Editor of *The Cactus and Succulent Journal
of Great Britain*

A cactus editor has to be a kindly soul with the best of intentions and to be all things to all men—and women! When he is first appointed he is filled with zeal and with the determination to provide such fare for his readers that they will feast. He is confident that he can depend upon you for his contributions, surrounded by well wishers as he seems to be, and some may be trusting enough to think that all they have to do is to collate your contributions and just publish them.

For a time his friends send him along their contributions and he gains confidence and thinks along the lines of an orderly procession of published material that will provide a Journal better than any other and he looks forward to the halo of fame which he believes will be his! Soon, however, he comes down to earth as he finds his friends dry up. He soon realizes how few are his friends and how many of you are just simply glad to receive the fare served up, and how many of you reserve to yourselves the right to be critical!

A cactus journal essentially is dependent upon organized societies, but the editor quickly becomes aware of the thousands, literally, of those interested in cacti who do not trouble to join up with their fellows in the society. In England there are over 3,000 people who are definitely interested in cactus, there may be more, but the membership of a society never goes to more than a few hundreds.

A Society is made up of all sorts, very few orthodox botanists who are rarely willing to help; the amateur botanist who is usually too fearful of criticism and, therefore, not anxious to expose himself to orthodox blasts; the pseudo botanist who is invariably the bane of an editor—he knows everything and if so often wrong—he gladly rushes into print without a great deal of forethought and with but a partial knowledge of his subject; then comes the mighty host of the truly very amateur collectors who are really interested in their plants, but as their knowledge of the subject is not extensive, they become too humble and believe their experiences contain nothing new. The amateur collector is counted in hundreds, the pseudos by the dozen and those who really know, by ones.

Therefore, the editor has to provide matter for his readers in accordance with their interests and it is the 95% amateurs of any society for

whom he has to cater. He has to provide plenty of chatty, interesting material which is understood by this majority, but he must provide more informed articles to help his mass along the road to knowledge and for this he has to rely on the only too few, usually unwilling, minority as well as on his own efforts.

The amateur collector has a host of experiences that are valuable to even the most advanced, but the editor finds it an insuperable task to rouse him to his possibilities. He is afraid of ridicule and it is quite true that a lot of what he submits is useless, but the tactful editor can invariably deal with such situations and still retain the confidence and affection of this class. He finds it is impossible to satisfy all his readers for even a short time and he has to become used to all the ill winds that blow! If he provides a really intellectual journal he loses the interest of his majority; if he provides merely a chatty journal, even the amateur collector gets tired in time. He has to balance his publication in such a way that most are satisfied.

The ideal editor is a man who can spend all his time with the subject, has an encyclopaedic mind and a working knowledge, at least, of botany and, especially, cacti, and I have not forgotten that terribly larger class—succulents. Paid editorships do not exist in cacti, a few try to, but they have to fill out by being on the watch all the time for the shrimps of profit. Almost without exception, the editor is simply an individual who does the work for the love of it and his rewards seems small although he thinks a lot of those small rewards of kindly understanding that come his way. He may put in a request in the journal—such as what do you want in your Journal? He gets very few, probably none, replies and he feels he has not a friend in the world; he complains to the society of apathy and is told there is only one thing wrong with the journal—it is not big enough and does not appear often enough! Few indeed think of the trouble that goes into making up the publication—in the editor's spare time after running a business or two to get his living! And how valuable is a little help and co-operation.

Very few cactus collectors indeed are beyond the stage of simply wanting fine looking plants, good bloomers and easy growers. These are the people who have to be catered for, but who by? Those who take a real scientific interest in the

subject are very few and shy. It is a fact that the good work in cactus, with very few exceptions, has been done by the amateur and it is equally true that the confusion and impossibilities of the subject have been due to the intrusion of people with imperfect knowledge, but even out of these imperfections we have achieved progress. More people know more about cacti than ever before. Too few people specialize and there are few who are competent to write extensively on the subject. It would be a great thing if certain members of a society agreed to specialize in different genera and contribute the sum total of their experience to the editor's readers, we should make rapid progress.

Let the amateur not be afraid of his knowledge, give it without stint and leave it to the editor to prune where it is necessary, confident in his judgment. The amateur has a fund of knowledge which he should pass on. Take an

interest in some genus that appeals to you, learn all you can about it, you will find that your hobby becomes increasingly engrossing and your life will be a fuller one. Get to know your editor's difficulties and co-operate with him and you will have a Journal that will be a pleasure to you because you are a part of it.

EDITOR'S NOTE: After editing the American Journal for 19 years, we can appreciate Mr. Shurly's words, and only an editor can fully understand the difficulties, work, and diplomacy involved. You start with many loyal contributors and as soon as you begin to depend upon them, they stop their support. Or, you make a good start in subscriptions and then along comes another magazine which always hurts your own circulation. The keynote of the problem lies in the lack of cooperation and the forgetting of self interest for the good of the cause. So long as we weaken our efforts by breaking up into small units, that soon fall by the way, we postpone the accomplishments that are possible only through unity.

SCOTT E. HASELTON.

